Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Grant Competition (84.412A)

Technical Assistance
for State Applicants

September 26, 2013

Housekeeping…

□ During the presentation all phone lines will be placed on mute to avoid feedback during the presentation.

□ Please use the "Q&A" tab to submit questions regarding RTT-ELC. We will try to answer all questions during today's presentation.

□ The PowerPoint slides from today's presentation will be posted in the Resources section of the RTT-ELC ed.gov website at:

http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/resources/.html

□ Thank you for participating in today's Webinar.

Agenda

- **Key Parts of the Application: Requirements, Priorities, Criteria, and Budget**

- **Completing Your Application: Format, Deadlines, Submission Procedures, and Resources**

Questions addressed periodically throughout presentation.

Key Parts of the Application

- Definitions
- Requirements
- Priorities
- Selection Criteria
- Budget and MOUs

Defined Terms

Defined Terms are found throughout the NIA and Application and are indicated by capitalization. Frequently used defined terms include:

- Children with High Needs
- Early Childhood Educator
- Early Learning and Development Program
- High-Quality Plan
- Participating State Agency

If a term is NOT in the definitions section, you may use your best judgment. If in doubt, explain your use of the term.

Q & A: Kindergarten Entry Assessment

Q: The definition of KEA states that the KEA may not be used as a single measure to make high-stakes decisions. What does this mean?

A: The KEA must not be used to prevent children's entry into kindergarten or as a single measure for high-stakes decisions. High-stakes decisions may include, but are not limited to, sanctions for children, employees, providers, or programs.

See FAQ #D-2 for more information.

Three Types of Requirements

- Eligibility Requirements
  - *Specify what applicants must have in place in order to compete for a grant.*

- Application Requirements
  - *List the elements that must be included in a complete application.*

- Program Requirements
  - *Specify what applicants must do if they win a grant.*

Q&A: State Advisory Council (SAC)

Q: The SAC requirement has changed from an eligibility to a program requirement. What is the significance of this change?

A: Making SAC a program requirement instead of an eligibility requirement will ensure that all States have the opportunity to apply regardless of whether they currently have a SAC/federal funding for a SAC. If the State does not have an operational SAC, it may describe in its application how it will use RTT-ELC funds to establish or re-establish its SAC.

See FAQ #B-4 for more information.

Q&A: SAC membership additions

Q: How is the SAC membership requirement in 2013 different from that of the 2011 competition?

A: In the 2011 competition, applicants were required to meet the membership requirements found in section 642B(b) of the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9837(b)). For the current competition, applicants must meet these same requirements and additionally include the: State's Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) administrator, State agency coordinators from both Part B section 619 and Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and State agency representatives responsible for health and mental health.

Priorities

The RTT-ELC application includes absolute, competitive, and invitational priorities.

- **Absolute priority**: only applicants that meet this priority will be considered for funding.

- **Competitive preference priority**: can earn the applicant extra or "competitive preference" points; are optional and applicant may address any or all of these priorities.

- **Invitational priority**: signal areas in which the Departments are particularly interested; are optional and do not earn applicants additional points.

Q&A: Absolute Priority 1

Q: Are there priorities that an applicant must meet in order to receive a grant?

A: Each applicant must address Absolute Priority 1, Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs. To meet this priority, an applicant must comprehensively and coherently address how it will build a system that increases the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs. An applicant must address Absolute Priority 1 throughout the application and may not address it separately. Reviewers will make a recommendation as to whether an application met or did not meet the priority after fully reviewing and evaluating the application.

See FAQs #C-4 and 5 for more information.

Core Areas--Sections (A) and (B)

- States must address in their application all of the selection criteria in the Core Areas-- Sections (A) (Successful State Systems) and (B) (High-Quality, Accountable Programs).
- See pages 27-59 in the application.

Q & A: Past Accomplishments

Q: On 9/10, you presented that information on past accomplishments could be placed throughout the application or in Criterion (A)(1). Is (A)(1) the best place to demonstrate past accomplishments and the other sections are where we should address what we are doing and what we plan to do?

A: Where you describe past accomplishments depends on the selection criteria. If something is particularly relevant to one of the selection criteria other than A(1), or if it provides important context for your plan in that area, you can include it in multiple places or cross-reference to where you already discussed it. Just be sure to direct the reviewer to what you want them to know.

Q & A: Data Tables

Q: When the tables in A(1) ask for "through kindergarten entry" or "until kindergarten entry", do both phrases mean we should not include any data for the kindergarten year?

A: Yes. If in doubt about how to complete a table, remember you can always explain your data using the box at the end of the table.

Q: Do we need to include text in B(2)(c) and B(4)(c) or are the performance tables sufficient?

A: There are narrative boxes provided for sections B(2) and B(4). It is up to the applicant to determine whether it makes sense to further break down the narrative response, given the applicant's particular situation.

Q&A: Table (A)(1)-4

Q: In Table (A)(1)-4, States are asked to provide data on State spending and State contributions for early learning and development. In providing the data, should a State only list State government funding, or may it include Federal, local, and private funding?

A: In this table, States should provide data on funding from State expenditures for each of the past five State fiscal years (beginning in 2009). States may use appropriations data for fiscal year 2013 if actual expenditures are not available. The State should not include Federal funding (some limited exceptions are described in FAQ #C-13).

See FAQ #C-12 for more information.

Q & A: TQRIS

Q: In regards to TQRIS, what is the expected participation? Increasing over the years of the grant or full participation for all public programs? When can participation be voluntary?

A: In Criterion (B)(2), States describe "the extent to which the State has maximized, or has a High-Quality Plan to maximize, program participation" in its TQRIS, including "implementing effective policies and practices to reach the goal of having all publicly funded Early Learning and Development Programs participate."

Q & A: TQRIS (continued)

Q: What do we mean by statewide TQRIS? Does this need to be in place at the time of the application?

A: Having a statewide TQRIS at the time of application is not a requirement. The absolute priority requires that the State "demonstrate how it will improve the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs by integrating and aligning resources and policies across Participating State Agencies and by designing and implementing a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System."

Q&A: Relationship between Selection Criteria B, C and D

Q: How do the selection criteria in the Focused Investment Areas (C) and (D) relate to the State's TQRIS in Core Area (B)?

A: In Focused Investment Areas (C) and (D), States have the opportunity to earn points for building on the fundamental elements that are the underpinnings of a high-quality TQRIS (Core Area B). States have the flexibility in (C) and (D) to focus on areas that take into account their current strengths, assets, and deficiencies.

See FAQ #C-21 for more information.

Q&A: Participation in KEA

Q: Must all children participate in the State's KEA if the State chooses to develop and implement one?

A: A State may choose to develop and implement a KEA (under Focused Investment Area (E)(1) and Competitive Preference Priority 3). A State that chooses to develop and implement a KEA should administer the assessment to children entering public kindergarten no later than the start of school year 2016-2017. A State is not expected to assess children entering kindergarten in private, parochial, or home schools.

See FAQ #D-4 for more information.

Q&A: "A common, statewide" KEA

Q: In Selection Criterion (E)(1) States are asked to describe their plans to implement a common statewide KEA. What is meant by "a common, statewide" assessment?

A: The assessment must cover all of the Essential Domains of School Readiness, conform to the recommendations of the National Research Council, be valid and reliable for its intended purposes and population, and be aligned with the State's Early Learning and Development Standards. States may choose to use a common battery of assessments rather than a single assessment so long as the battery is used throughout the State.

See FAQ #D-7 for more information.

Q&A: Relationship Between E1 and CPP3

Q: What is the relationship between Selection Criterion (E)(1) and Competitive Preference Priority 3 (KEA)?

A: In Focused Investment Area (E), States must choose to address at least one selection criterion. If a State chooses to focus on a KEA, it may address Selection Criterion (E)(1). If a majority of reviewers determine that the application earns a score of at least 70 percent of the points available for that criterion, then the applicant will earn 10 additional points under Competitive Preference Priority 3.

See FAQ #D-6 for more information.

Budget Information

- ☐ In the budgets and budget narratives, States provide a detailed description of how they plan to use Federal RTT-ELC grant funds and funds from other sources to support projects under the State Plan.

- ☐ Use the excel tables on the RTT-ELC website.

- ☐ Organize by PSA and by project.

- ☐ The budget narratives should be of sufficient scope and detail for the Departments to determine if the costs are necessary, reasonable, and allowable.

Q&A: Distributing funds to local entities

Q: In developing the proposed RTT-ELC State Plan in the application, may a State propose to distribute funds to localities and other entities? If so, to whom and using what mechanisms?

A: A State may distribute RTT-ELC grant funds to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, or other partners, including faith-based organizations, through subgrants, MOUs, interagency agreements, contracts, or other mechanisms authorized by State procurement laws.

See FAQ #F-1 for more information.

Q&A: Budget Narrative

Q: What is required in the budget narratives for Parts I and II? Do we write a budget narrative for every project within each PSA's narrative?

A: Applicants should follow the detailed instructions for the budget narratives on pages 90 and 94 of the application.

In Part I, States provide information on the overall structure of the State's budget for implementing the State Plan. In Part II, States provide a narrative for each PSA. This should include, for each project, "an explanation of the PSA's roles and responsibilities" and "an explanation of how the proposed project annual budget was derived."

Q&A: Budget Spreadsheets

Q: What are the budget spreadsheets referred to in the application, and why are States required to submit them?

A: The Departments have prepared a set of spreadsheets that contain all the budget tables that States are required to fill out and submit as part of their application. The spreadsheets will help States produce overall statewide budgets that are accurate and consistent with their individual Participating State Agency and project budgets

See FAQs #F-2 through 4 for more information.

Q&A: Indirect Costs

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Q: How may a State include indirect costs in its FY 2013 RTT-ELC budget?

A: A State may choose either to allow each PSA to use its own approved indirect cost rate or may use the same approved indirect cost rate for all of its PSAs. If the State chooses to use a single indirect cost rate, the State must use the lowest approved rate among the PSAs. If the State chooses to use different approved indirect cost rates for different PSAs, the applicant must copy the Indirect Cost form on page 91 of the application and complete that form for each PSA.

See FAQs #F-6 and 7 for more information.

Q&A: Rules Governing MOUs

Q: What are the rules governing MOUs?

A: There are two approaches States may take; either approach is fine. In the first approach each Participating State Agency (PSA) would execute its own MOU, including a scope of work, with the Lead Agency. In the second approach there would be one master MOU that would be executed by each PSA, and then individual scope-of-work exhibits would be attached for each PSA.

See FAQ #F-5 for more information.

Completing Your Application

- Format

- Deadlines

- Submission Procedures

- Planning

- Resources

Application Format

Applications should be organized in the manner described in the application, which provides instructions for all sections.

- Always cross reference to important information in other sections.

- Include clear headings to help the Department staff and peer reviewers match the narrative with the selection criteria.

- We recommend that you limit your total page count for the narrative to no more than 150 pages of State-authored text.

Q & A: Format

Q: When one is completing the tables do the 1.5 spacing and 12 point font recommendations apply?

A: These formatting recommendations do not apply to the tables.

Q: Are "wet" signatures required with the application?

A: Yes. Applicants must submit a signed original and one hard copy of Section IV of the application (assurances and certifications), along with the CDs/DVDs.

Deadlines

- Notice of Intent to Apply deadline: **September 30, 2013**

    - We will be able to develop a more efficient process for reviewing grant applications if we have a better understanding of the number of applications that we will receive. The notice of intent to apply is optional and non-binding.

    - Send an e-mail to RTT-ELC.P3.Competition@ed.gov with "Intent to Apply" in the e-mail subject line. Does not have to come from Governor.

- Final application deadline: **October 16, 2013 at 4:30 EST**

    - **Mail or hand delivery. See application for important delivery instructions.**

    - **Be sure to use the correct CFDA number: 84.412A**

Submission Procedures

- We strongly recommend the applicant submit three CDs or DVDs containing the following four files:
    1. A single searchable .PDF document containing the body of the narrative and budget tables. (Note that a .PDF created from a scanned document is NOT searchable.)
    2. A single file in a .PDF format that contains all application appendices
    3. A single file in a .PDF format that contains all of the required signature pages
    4. A single, separate file of the completed electronic budget spreadsheets

Planning Considerations

- Remember that you'll need to:
  - Obtain the required signatures before you submit your application
  - Obtain the certification from the State's Attorney General
  - Obtain the State's Governor's signature
  - Complete a detailed budget
- Do not wait until the last minute to submit your application! Late applications will not be reviewed

Application Deadline is on or before 4:30 pm EST

October 16, 2013

Applicant Resources

Applicant Information: *http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/applicant.html*

- *Notice Inviting Applications (NIA) and Notice of Final Priorities (NFP)*
- *Application Package*
- *Executive Summary of RTT-ELC*
- *Budget Spreadsheets*
- *2011 Applications and Comments*

Presentations and Transcripts:

http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/resources.html

Frequently Asked Questions:

http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/faq.html

Thank You

You may continue to email us your questions at RTT-ELC.P3.Competition@ed.gov through October 11, 2013. However, we will only be able to answer technical questions, or direct you to relevant FAQs. We will not be able to answer substantive questions that might give your State information that other States don't have.

Good luck with your application!